

LICENSING REGULATORY COMMITTEE

Testing of Hackney Carriages and Private Hire Vehicles 24th March 2016

Report of the Chief Executive

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide information to the Committee about the arrangements for testing hackney carriages and private hire vehicles, in the light of a matter raised at the recent Taxi Surgery.

This report is public

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) That the current arrangement for testing vehicles be noted and endorsed.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Council directly operates a vehicle maintenance unit (VMU). In order to fulfil the vitally important role of ensuring the safety for the public of vehicles used as hackney carriages and private hire vehicles, vehicle tests are undertaken directly by the Council, and have been for at least the last twenty five years. The staff who test these vehicles are fully trained and are regularly checked by the DVSA (formerly VOSA). The actual test is more stringent than a standard MOT and covers both the safety of the vehicle and other licensing requirements. A vehicle that passes the test is issued with a Certificate of Compliance, rather than an MOT certificate.
- 1.2 A Certificate of Compliance exempts the vehicle from requiring an MOT: the two are different. The Council can define the time period for which a Certificate of Compliance is issued, up to the maximum of a year, whereas an MOT is issued for the full year.
- 1.3 Licensed vehicles up to two years old are tested annually. Vehicles more than two years old are tested every six months, and vehicles over ten years old are tested every four months. A Certificate of Compliance is issued to the date when the next test is due.
- 1.4 Besides testing the vehicles, the VMU inspectors liaise closely with licensing staff to report their findings, discuss concerns and address ongoing issues. This all gives additional assurance that the vehicles are suitable and safe for use by the public, reassurance which could not be provided if the vehicles

were permitted to be tested at any MOT testing station.

- 1.5 At a recent Taxi Surgery, a number of members of the trade requested that the Council issue an MOT certificate rather than a Certificate of Compliance. Their reasoning was that this would ensure that the history of the vehicle, its mileage and any test failures, was available online for future reference, and that it would enable licensed vehicles to be taxed online. It was also suggested that vehicles could be tested less frequently than at present.
- 1.6 The Council's Vehicle Maintenance Unit which issues the Certificates of Compliance is also an MOT testing centre. All MOTs are registered with DVSA (Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency) and are therefore logged on the DVSA database. However, if an MOT was issued in addition to the Certificate of Compliance, the actual administration of the MOT would mean the total amount of time required for the MOT and Certificate of Compliance would be greater than under the current system. This would increase the costs, as well as delaying drivers for longer at the VMU. If licensed vehicles were to be issued with an MOT, increased capacity at the VMU would be required.
- 1.7 Officers are satisfied that the current arrangements for testing vehicles, both in terms of frequency and rigour, are satisfactory to ensure high standards of safety for the public, and consistency between vehicles. There is nothing to prevent an individual proprietor obtaining an MOT certificate independently and separately from the Council's testing arrangements. However, if the VMU were to issue MOTs as well as Certificates of Compliance, additional staff would be required, and this would be a matter for Cabinet rather than this Committee, as it relates to the provision of services rather than the licensing of vehicles. If the Committee wished licensed vehicles to be issued with an MOT certificate as well as a Certificate of Compliance, it would need to ask Cabinet to consider this.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 Officers would recommend that the current arrangements for testing licensed vehicles be noted and endorsed.

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

(including Health & Safety, Equality & Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)

None directly arising from this report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

If Cabinet were to consider increasing capacity at the VMU in order for MOTs to be issued in respect of licensed vehicles, the financial implications would be considered at that time.

OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**Human Resources:**

None

Information Services:

None

Property:

None

Open Spaces:

None

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

Consulted and no comments to add.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

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